

## Message Text

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ACTION EA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02

INR-07 L-02 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

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P R 021137Z MAY 75

FM AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3606

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY PARIS

CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L VIENTIANE 2985

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV, PINT, LA

SUBJECT: MOOD OF VIENTIANE SIDE

1. EVENTS IN CAMBODIA AND VIETNAM HAVE SEVERELY ERODED THE WILL AND MORALE OF THE VIENTIANE SIDE. DEGREE OF DEMORALIZATION IS SO SERIOUS THAT THERE APPEARS TO BE NO QUESTION OF RESISTING MILITARILY IF PL DECIDED TO USE FORCE, PARTICULARLY IF THEY WERE BACKED BY NORTH VIETNAMESE. THERE IS IN FACT SOME QUESTION REGARDING THE VERY MAINTENANCE IN BEING OF FAR. (DATT PREPARING SEPARAATE REPORT.) POLITICALLY, YESTERDAY'S MILD DEMONSTRATION (VIENTIANE 2943) HAS NOW PUSHED SOME MINISTERS TO CONSIDER SERIOUSLY RESIGNING. ACCORDING TO BRITISH AMBASSADOR DAVIDSON, HE LEARNED YESTERDAY THAT THERE HAD BEEN DISCUSSIONS OF THE POSSIBLE RESIGNATION OF THE MOST PRIMINENT VIENTIANE SIDE MINISTERS: SPECIFICALLY, MINDEF SISOUK, MINFIN NGON SANANIKONE, MINHEALTH KHAMPAI ABHAY, SECSTATE OF MFA TIANETHONE CHANTHARASY, AND SECSTATE FOR RELIGION SOUKAN VILAYSARN. (ALL OF THESE HAD BEEN NOMINALLY TARGETS OF DEMONSTRATION.) DAVIDSON INITIALLY SEEMED TO FAVOR SUCH AN ATTEMPT AT ACCOMMODATION. I EVINCED  
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A GOOD DEAL OF PRUDENCE IN THIS REGARD. I SAID THAT WHAT

MATTERED WAS MAINTENANCE OF MEANINGFUL COALITION; FOR INSTANCE, IF MINDEF CHANGED AND A NEW MAN NAMED WHO WOULD BE ONLY PL PUPPET, THIS WOULD CREATE SEVERE DIFFICULTIES FOR US IN MAINTAINING MAP. IN LAST WEEKS, WE HAD BEEN TAKING POSITIVE ATTITUDE WITH LAO WHO NEEDED ENCOURAGEMENT, AND WE SHOULD HELP MAINTAIN THEIR MORALE.

2. IN LATER PRIVATE CONVERSATION, NGON CONFIRMED SUCH DISCUSSIONS HELD. VIENTIANE SIDE HAS "LOST," HE SAID, AND PROBLEM NOW WAS TO AVOID CONFRONTATION AND RESORT TO DIPLOMACY. IN THIS REGARD HE CRITICIZED SISOUK FOR THE USE OF T-28S AT SALA PHOU KHOUM; THIS WAS SEEKING CONFRONTATION WHICH VIENTIANE SIDE COULD NOT WIN. WHAT VIENTIANE SIDE HAD TO ASCERTAIN FROM PL WAS WHETHER THEY WERE PREPARED TO CONTINUE TO OPERATE WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE VIENTIANE AGREEMENTS. IF SO, WAY HAD TO BE FOUND TO PRESERVE COALITION. HE THOUGHT THAT RESIGNATION OF MEMBERS WHO HAD TAKEN LEAD IN DISCUSSIONS WITH PL IN CABINET MIGHT PERHAPS HELP EASE TENSIONS BETWEEN TWO SIDES. IN ANSWER TO MY QUESTION, HE SAID THAT RESIGNING MINISTERS MIGHT BE REPLACED BY PEOPLE LIKE KEO VIPHAKONE (AMBASSADOR TO FRANCE) AND INPENG SOURYADHAY (AMBASSADOR TO UK). THEY WERE LESS TAINTED AND MIGHT BE MORE ACCEPTABLE TO OTHER SIDE. NGON EMPHASIZED THAT THERE HAD BEEN NO MEETING OF VIENTIANE SIDE; HE HAD NOT EVEN DISCUSSED MATTER WITH SISOUK, WHO, HE UNDERSTOOD HOWEVER, WAS AGAINST THIS COURSE. IT WAS JUST AN IDEA THAT HE WAS EXPLORING, HE SAID, BUT MANIFESTLY HE FOUND IT AN ATTRACTIVE POSSIBILITY.

3. I SAID THAT SITUATION WAS INDEED DIFFICULT, PARTICULARLY FOR MINISTER IN HIS POSITION. HOWEVER, I WANTED TO ASSURE HIM U.S. REMAINING IN LAOS, CONTINUING ITS AID PROGRAMS AND SUPPORTING PGNU AND ITS POLICY. WHAT SEEMED TO ME IMPORTANT WAS TO PRESERVE CEASE-FIRE AND INDEPENDENCE OF COUNTRY. WHILE I FULLY RECOGNIZED POSSIBILITY OF HARDENING PL ATTITUDES, I HAD AS YET SEEN NO CONCRETE EVIDENCE OF A CHANGE. RIGHT NOW, THEIR MAJESTIES WERE IN SAM NEUA AND I WAS IMPRESSED BY TONE OF SPEECHES AND BY FACT ENTIRE PL LEADERSHIP HAD SHOWN UP FOR OCCASION. IT SEEMED TO ME A VERY REAL EXPRESSION OF LAO NATIONALISM  
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WHICH I BELIEVED NECESSARY TO PRESERVE LAO INDEPENDENCE. I ALSO BELIEVE PL RECOGNIZED NEED OF TRAINED MANPOWER, OF WHICH VIENTIANE SIDE HAS PREPONDERANCE. CHIEF WEAKNESSES OF PL, I SAID, WERE LACK OF HUMAN RESOURCES AND CONSEQUENT HEAVY DEPENDENCE ON VIETNAMESE. THUS, PL HAD REAL INTEREST IN COALITION. HE READILY AGREED WITH THOSE COMMENTS.

4. HE ASKED MY VIEWS OF POWERS' POSITION RE LAOS. (A VERY LAOTIAN QUESTION.) I REPEATED U.S. WAS REMAINING STEADY ON COURSE. I THOUGHT CHINA AND USSR SATISFIED WITH INDEPENDENT LAOS. QUESTION IN MY MIND WAS HANOI'S FUTURE POLICY. ONE COULD ARGUE NORTH VIETNAM MIGHT WANT UNITE INDOCHINA UNDER PARTY IT DOMINATED. HOWEVER, THERE WAS HISTORY OF FRICTION BETWEEN LAO AND VIETNAMESE, AND ONE COULD IMAGINE PL MIGHT NOT FIND IT VERY COMFORTABLE TO DEPEND EVEN MORE THAN NOW ON FRATERNAL VIETNAMESE ADVISERS. IN SUM, I THOUGHT THAT INTERNATIONAL SITUATION ON WHOLE FAVORED AND SUPPORTED COALITION GOVERNMENT IN LAOS.

5. REVERTING TO U.S. POSITION, I ASKED HIM WHAT IN HIS VIEW U.S/ COULD DO BEYOND WHAT IT WAS DOING TO RESTORE MORALE IN LAOS. HE IMMEDIATELY ANSWERED: INCREASE CONTRIBUTION TO FEOF. U.S. HAD MAINTAINED SAME LEVEL OF CONTRIBUTION FOR FIVE YEARS, BUT DOLLAR HAD LOST PURCHASING POWER. RISING COST-OF-LIVING DUE TO LACK OF FOREIGN EXCHANGE WAS CAUSING SERIOUS DIFFICULTIES FOR ALL LAO. INCREASED FX IN FEOF WOULD HELP STABILIZE SITUATION, AND IN RESPONSE TO MY QUESTION, HE ANSWERED ADDITIONAL AMOUNT NEEDED WAS \$15 MILLION. (IT WAS NOT OCCASION TO GET INVOLVED IN TECHNICAL DISCUSSION OF THESE ISSUES, BUT HIS ANSWER TO MY BASIC QUESTION REFLECTS A FEELING OF CONSTRAINT ON PART MANY LAO OFFICIALS OVER PAST YEAR AS REAL AVAILABLE RESOURCES HAVE BECOME MORE RESTRICTED.)

6. COMMENT: WE SHALL SEE OTHER VIENTIANE SIDE LEADERS TONIGHT. WE SHALL ENCOURAGE MAINTENANCE OF POSITIVE ATTITUDE AND DISCOURAGE THIS DEFEATIST ATTITUDE. WILL COMMENT FURTHER TOMORROW.  
CHAPMAN

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## Message Attributes

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